Tartini & Vivaldi

Devil's Trill Sonata &
Didone Abbandonata
Vivaldi: Double
Violin Concertos

David Oistrakh
Isaac Stern
Igor Oistrakh

alto

David Oistrakh
plays Tartini & Vivaldi

Giuseppe Tartini: ***Sonata in G Minor, B. G5 "Devil's Trill"***

1	Larghetto affetuoso – Allegro	6:51
2	Grave – Allegro assai – Grave – Allegro assai – Grave	4:52
3	Allegro assai – Adagio	3:28

Vladimir Yampolsky, *piano*

Antonio Vivaldi: ***Concerto Grosso in A Minor, RV522 "Echo"***

4	I. Allegro	3:53	6	III. Allegro	3:57
5	II. Larghetto e spiritoso	4:22			

Igor Oistrakh, *second violin*

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra • Eugene Goossens, *conductor*

Vivaldi: ***Concerto for Two Violins in G Minor, RV517***

7	I. Allegro	3:32	9	III. Allegro	3:35
8	II. Andante				2:05

Vivaldi: ***Concerto for Two Violins in D Major, RV512***

10	I. Allegro molto	3:10	12	III. Allegro	3:10
11	II. Largo				2:37

Vivaldi: ***Concerto for Two Violins in C Minor, RV509***

13	I. Allegro ma poco e cantabile	4:08	15	III. Allegro	2:51
14	II. Andante molto				2:52

Vivaldi: ***Concerto for Two Violins in D Minor, RV514***

16	I. Allegro non molto	4:05	18	III. Allegro molto	3:12
17	II. Adagio				3:29

Isaac Stern, *second violin*

The Philadelphia Orchestra • Eugene Ormandy, *conductor*

Tartini: *Sonata in G Minor, Op.1 No. 10, B. g10*
"Didone abbandonata"

19	I. Adagio	6:09	21	III. Largo	1:49
20	II. Presto non troppo	1:45	22	IV. Allegro commodo	2:46

Vladimir Yampolsky, *piano*

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

Giuseppe Tartini was born in Pirano (now Piran in Slovenia) in 1692 where his father managed the local salt mills. His education pointed towards a career in the Church, however the young Tartini had other ideas. When he was sixteen he travelled to Padua where he studied law. His studies were interrupted when he was forced to leave Padua, having married outside his family's wishes. For a number of years he was given refuge in a Franciscan order in Assisi, and it was during this time that he taught himself the violin. Following the death of his protector he was able to support himself playing the violin and it is known that in 1714 he was playing at the opera house in Ancona. Although details of his early life are sketchy it is documented that between 1717 and 1721 he spent time as a peripatetic violinist in various churches, opera houses and schools in the area around Venice.

By 1721 his reputation was such that he was invited to become the first violinist at S Antonio in Padua without having to pass the required examination. He was also given leave to travel to other areas in Italy whilst in post. This special permission proved useful two years later when he was able to travel to Prague in order to perform at the coronation of Emperor Charles VI of Bohemia. From his early years Tartini had been something of a hothead (as well as an excellent fencer) and this visit to Prague apparently coincided with a scandal in which Tartini was accused of fathering a local innkeeper's child! However it is known that three years later he was back in Padua where he was soon to open an internationally recognised violin school, probably the first of its kind. This academy proved to be highly influential: many of his students (who generally remained for a couple of years) went on to teach, perform and compose throughout Europe. Tartini was also friendly with other experienced teachers such as Padre Martini whose own school in Bologna acted as a magnet for many composers.

Despite tempting offers from elsewhere in Europe, Tartini maintained his base in Padua until his death in 1770. He did however make short visits to other Italian cities as a virtuoso performer until c1740 when his career was foreshortened by a stroke which left him partially paralysed. In later years Tartini published various treatises which expanded on his teaching theory, performing styles, harmony, philosophy and mathematics. Much of this was unintelligible to his intended audience (which did not however prevent Leopold Mozart and others from plagiarising his work) and his dense prose was heavily criticised. Rousseau however

acknowledged Tartini's theories to support his own work.

Many of Tartini's innovations and theories stemmed from his early days in Assisi, and perhaps the most important of these theories is that of the 'resultant' tone. The 'resultant' tone can be heard when two loud notes are played together, and two other tones can also be heard: a low one (known as the difference tone, so called because it corresponds to the difference between the two vibration numbers) and a higher, much fainter one (the summation tone which corresponds to the sum of the vibration numbers). Another innovation of Tartini's came about because he wished his students to imitate the phrasing and expression of a singer, and so he introduced the longer bow to help them in phrasing.

Although he played in opera house orchestras and lived at a time when a successful musical career could generally only be achieved by writing for the stage, Tartini showed no inclination to compose operas. The vast majority of works by this hugely prolific composer were either concertos for violin (c135) or string sonatas (c200). However as his violin teaching demonstrated, he did have an interest in the human voice and he left a handful of religious works. An awareness of opera and song can be seen in two other aspects of his work: firstly, many of his slow movements are based upon folk tunes he remembered from his childhood in Slovenia; and secondly, a number of movements are headed by inscriptions from opera libretti by Metastasio (Pietro Antonio Domenico Trapassi, 1698-1782).

Tartini's works quickly went out of fashion after his death in 1770 and it is only due to the unstinting work of the 20th century musicologist Minos Dounias that we are aware of the extent of Tartini's *oeuvres*. Dounias has catalogued Tartini's music, not in chronological order (for as more music is discovered it would lead to untold confusion!) but according to their keys.

Tartini once dreamt that he had bargained his soul with the devil. As he later recounted to J G de Lalande (*Voyage d'un François en Italie* 1769) he was initially delighted to have such a 'novel servant'. Handing the devil his own instrument, Tartini heard him play 'a sonata so unusual and so beautiful performed with such mastery and intelligence, on a level I had never before conceived was possible! I was so enraptured and overcome that I stopped breathing and awoke gasping. Immediately I seized my violin, hoping to recall some shred of what I had just heard – but in vain. The piece I then composed, the ***Devil's Sonata,*** is without doubt my best, but it falls so far short of the one that stunned me that I would have smashed my violin and given up music forever if I could but possess it'.

One can perfectly understand that Tartini found this experience exhilarating as the resulting work, even if 'far short of the one that stunned', is itself of exceptional difficulty. The work is in three movements, the first of which is based upon a simple melody and gives little indication of the fireworks to come; the second movement is rather more intricate whilst the finale subtitled 'Sogni dell'autore' (the author's dreams) contains the hair-raising passages that give the sonata its name in which the player's left hand is required to carry two parts simultaneously. Although known during Tartini's lifetime, it was only published complete as part of a collection *L'art du violon* by J B Cartier in 1798. Its route to publication was circuitous, having come to Cartier from Tartini's pupil Pietro Nardini by way of Nardini's student Pierre Baillot. De Lalande dates the sonata as early as 1713, but experts consider this unlikely, placing it instead from the late 1740s. Post-Tartini, tales of diabolical violinists excited later audiences: Paganini, aided by his cadaverous appearance, was widely believed to be possessed; an E T A Hoffmann heroine sings herself to death egged on by a demonic violinist and Pugni's ballet *Le violon du diable* (1849) concerns a violinist who enlists the help of Satan in winning his sweetheart.

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The year 1703, as well as seeing him ordained as a priest, also marked the beginning of **Antonio Vivaldi**'s long association with the *Ospedale della Pietà*. This charitable institution, one of four such in Venice, looked after, and gave an education to, orphaned and abandoned girls. At the *Pietà*, to which Vivaldi was first appointed violin teacher, some of the girls were given a general education while others a more definitely musical one. Over the years Vivaldi held various posts there and composed a considerable amount of music for his pupils to play. On 2 July 1723, the Governors of the *Pietà* decreed that Vivaldi should henceforth provide two concertos every month (to be sent by post, at no cost to themselves, if the composer happened to be away from Venice at the time) and that he should rehearse each of them three or four times before performance.

Of these concertos about twenty of them were for two violins one of which, the one in A minor, Op.3 No.8, Bach later transcribed for the organ.The story of Dido has inspired many fine works – from Purcell,

Berlioz, Cavalli, Clementi, Hasse and many others – but Tartini's marvellous '***Didone abbandonata'*** deserves a place of honour in the list. It can be thought of as an instrumental version of the baroque solo vocal lament. The listener will surely think of Purcell and the most famous aria from *Dido and Aeneas*. The three movements of Tartini's Sonata, although not having benefit of verbal text, are on an expressive par with any of these vocal laments. It covers the gamut of relevant emotions, begin- ning with complexities of memory, hope and fear in the opening 'affetuoso', the angry recogni- tion of truth in the central 'presto' and the terrible bleakness of the closing 'allegro'. This is masterpiece which ought to be better known and this is a splendid performance which puts a wonderfully persuasive case for the piece.

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NOTES ON THE ARTISTS

David Oistrakh was born on 30 September 1908 in Odessa, a port city on the Black Sea, then part of the Russian Empire, now in the Ukraine. At the age of three and a half, he was given a toy violin by his father which gave him much pleasure and, eventually this was replaced by a real one so that he could begin to have lessons. By then, his mother had been taking him to the opera where he would stand in the orchestra pit, fascinated by all the musicians and their instruments.

His teacher was to be Pyotr Stolyarsky, who insisted that all his violin pupils should learn to play the viola as well. In 1914, when barely six years old, he took part in his first concert, a student event, as the youngest participant. In 1923 he played for the first time in public with an orchestra, his choice of concerto being the one in A minor by Bach. It was also in that year that he enrolled at the Odessa Conservatory from which he graduated three years later, playing Bach's *Chaconne*, Tartini's 'Devil's Trill' Sonata, and Prokofiev's First Violin Concerto. In 1927 he was invited to perform Alexander Glazunov's Violin Concerto in Kiev with the composer conducting and that led to a subsequent invitation to play the Tchaikovsky Concerto with the Leningrad Philharmonic and Nikolai Malko.

He moved to Moscow in 1927 and it was there that he met his future wife, Tamara Rotareva. They were married the following year and, in 1931, their one and only son, Igor, was born. Within a few years, David had taken up a teaching post at the Moscow Conservatory, later becoming a professor. Amongst his pupils there were Oleg Kagen, Gidon Kremer and his own son. During the Second World War, he toured extensively throughout the Soviet Union, playing from a large repertoire which included new works composed by composers such as Nikolai Myaskovsky, Aram Khachaturian and Sergei Prokofiev. Indeed the Khachaturian concerto, like the two by his friend, Dmitri Shostakovich, were written for, and are dedicated to, him.

It was not until after the War that the authorities allowed him to travel outside the Soviet Union. His first concert appearance in the West was in 1949 in Helsinki and, after visiting Italy, Germany and France over the next few years, he finally arrived in the London in 1954. At his first recital, which took place at the Royal Albert Hall on 10 November, he played works by Beethoven, Prokofiev, Schumann and Ysaÿe and then, a fortnight later, made his British concerto debut in the same hall with the Philharmonia Orchestra. At this concert he played the Brahms Concerto

with Norman Del Mar as conductor and that by Khachaturian under the baton of the composer himself.

The year before his father had appeared for the first time on a London stage, **Igor Oistrakh** had made his own London debut at the Royal Albert Hall. On that occasion he too had played the Khachaturian Concerto, along with that by Beethoven. Like his father, Igor Oistrakh was born in Odessa – on 27 April 1931 – the city by then being part of the Soviet Union. He studied with his father's teacher, Pyotr Stolyarsky, and then at the Central School of Music in Moscow. He made his concert debut in 1948 and the following year entered the Moscow Conservatory as a student.

Ten years later he returned as a member of the faculty and in 1965 became a lecturer there. He has also held a professorship at the Royal Conservatory in Brussels and, like his father before him, was awarded the title of People's Artist of the USSR.

Following his father's death in 1974 – he died of a heart attack after having conducted a series of concerts in Amsterdam – Igor carried on the family tradition of playing and conducting with his wife, the pianist, Natalia Zertsalova, and their son, Valery, who is himself, a prize-winning concert violinist.

According to Igor (as quoted by Viktor Jusefovich in his book 'David Oistrakh: Conversations with Igor Oistrakh') his father's debut as a conductor took place in the Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatory on 17 January 1962. At that concert, Igor was playing the concertos by Beethoven and Brahms and also Bach's in E major and, as he put it 'father suffered from stage fright as he was very conscious of his responsiblity at his first performance'. Father and son were to appear on the concert platform and in the recording studio together on many occasions, sometimes as conductor and soloist, sometimes as duo partners in concertos for two violins. It was in Moscow in 1947 that David and Igor Oistrakh first played together, the work being Bach's Concerto for two violins. During the 1950s they toured together extensively adding the double concertos of Vivaldi to their repertoire. This was a most fruitful partnership and, as Igor once claimed, 'when we play together, we are not father and son but musicians'.

When David Oistrakh first heard **Isaac Stern** playing concertos by Mozart, Brahms and Bach (the A minor) in Antwerp he wrote home to tell his family that he had just seen and listened to 'a new star from the violinists' heavens'. That was in 1951 and, within four or five years, the two of them were recording a double concerto by Vivaldi in Philadelphia. According to Stern, they had tossed a coin to decide which of them should play first violin and which second on this occasion. Listening to the recording many years later, Stern claimed to find it difficult to determine which of them had played which part.

When Isaac Stern was about ten months old – he had been born on 21 July 1920 in the Ukraine – his parents took him to San Francisco. There he studied the violin at that city's conservatory and, at the age of fifteen, played the Brahms Concerto with its Symphony Orchestra and Pierre Monteux. Over the next sixty years Stern enjoyed an illustrious career which took him all over the world, playing with all the great orchestras and conductors. He was also politically active, especially in support of Israel, and refused to play in Germany because of the Holocaust. He died in September 2001 at the age of eighty-one.

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